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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-first year

Identical letters dated 29 June 2006 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I regret to inform you that Israel, the occupying Power, is continuing and widening its destructive military campaign against the Palestinian people and their leadership in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The occupying Power continues to commit flagrant violations and grave breaches of international law as it continues to carry out violent military assaults against the civilian population, against civilian property and infrastructure and against the Palestinian Authority itself.

Overnight, the Israeli occupying forces raided several cities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, kidnapping and detaining at least 64 Palestinians, the majority of them high-ranking, democratically elected officials, including at least nine Ministers of the Palestinian Authority Cabinet, 24 members of the Palestinian Legislative Council and several mayors from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Among the Cabinet Ministers being held by the occupying Power are the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education as well as the Ministers of Finance, Planning, Local Government, Prisoner Affairs, Social Affairs, Labor, Religious Affairs and Jerusalem Affairs. The detention of these democratically-elected officials, in addition to the continued imprisonment of more than 9,000 other Palestinians in Israeli jails, constitutes a blatant violation of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949. Moreover, the direct targeting by Israel, the occupying Power, of senior Palestinian officials in such an operation is a clear indication of Israel's malicious intent not only to sabotage the recent progress made in terms of the Palestinian national dialogue and to severely undermine the functioning of the Palestinian Authority but also to ultimately cause the collapse of the Authority as a whole.

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In addition to these unlawful kidnappings and detentions, the occupying Power has continued to expand its military campaign in the Gaza Strip, now amassing troops along the northern border of Gaza and threatening to invade towns and refugee camps in the north. The occupying forces have also continued carrying out missile air strikes and tank artillery bombardments and warplanes to emit sonic booms over the densely populated civilian neighbourhoods throughout Gaza, terrorizing the civilian population, and have continued to cause wanton destruction to civilian property and infrastructure, including the bulldozing of agricultural lands, the bombing of a soccer field at the Islamic University of Gaza and the bombing of roads and water pipelines. The Palestinian civilian population in the already devastated and impoverished Gaza Strip is now under complete siege as a result of Israel's closure of all border crossings, and the majority of people are being deprived of electricity and clean water, including in hospitals, and food and medical shortages are intensifying, exacerbating the dire humanitarian crisis and hardships being endured, especially by children and the elderly.

The international community cannot remain passive as Israel, the occupying Power, continues to commit such widespread and systematic human rights violations, war crimes and State terror against the Palestinian civilian population under its occupation, in grave breach of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949. Such breaches and the resultant dramatic deterioration of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, surely demand the attention of and action by the international community, including, in particular, the Security Council of the United Nations. The Security Council must uphold its responsibilities, including its primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security, which is clearly in jeopardy in the region, and, moreover, the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention must uphold their obligations to respect and to ensure respect of the Convention in all circumstances.

The illegal practices and actions being carried out by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people and their leadership should be strongly condemned and Israel should be demanded to scrupulously abide by its obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law. In this regard, serious efforts must be undertaken to compel Israel to immediately cease its campaign of aggression in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including, inter alia, the immediate cessation of military attacks against the Palestinian civilian population, the cessation of the destruction of civilian properties and infrastructure and the release of all of the democratically-elected Palestinian officials it has detained. Only such concerted and urgent action by the international community can stem the dangerous downward spiral of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and avert the further escalation of this grave crisis.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 249 letters to you regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 28 June 2006 (A/ES-10/341-S/2006/443), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Feda **Abdelhady-Nasser**
Chargé d'affaires, a.i.